(b) if so, the details of their status; and

(c) the action being taken by DCGI to ban these irrational combinations?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) The drug formulations marketed in the country and reported irrational in the present context of knowledge are examined by the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (a Statutory Committee under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940), through an Expert Committee and in consultation with medical Experts on a continuous basis. The drug formulations found harmful or irrational are prohibited by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare through a Gazette Notification. So far, the Government has banned 75 drugs/drug formulations for manufacture and sale in the country. All such banned drugs are uniformly withdrawn throughout the country.

Monitoring of prices of essential and life saving drugs

210. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the prices of some essential and life saving drugs have gone up creating a lot of inconvenience to the general public;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is any Government agency in place to monitor the prices of drugs from time to time and if so, steps taken by it to control and contain the prices of essential drugs; and

(d) the role of NPPA in this context?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (d) The Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995 (DPCO' 95) does not make any distinction between Life Saving drugs and other drugs. In accordance with the provisions of the said Order, the Government fixes prices of the drugs listed in its First Schedule and formulations based thereon. In case, there is any violation of the approved/notified price of a Scheduled formulation, action is taken under the provisions of the DPCO '95.

Prices of non-Scheduled formulations are fixed by the manufacturers themselves keeping in view the various factors like cost of production, marketing/selling expenses, R&D expenses, trade commission, market competition, product innovation, product quality etc. The Government/ National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority regularly monitors the movement of prices of medicines of mass consumption marketed in trade channel and takes corrective measures where the public interest is found to be adversely affected.

Amendments to ECA

211. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Essential Commodities Act (ECA) of 1955 has any relevance in 2004, as what was "Essential" in 1955 may not necessarily be essential in 2004;

(b) whether Government are thinking of scrapping the ECA and whether, in the wake of Common Minimum Programme of UPA Government, this will be possible;

(c) whether any study has been made to evolve modalities in the present scenario to effectively meet the objectives envisaged at the time ECA was enacted; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) The list of essential commodities has been reviewed from time to time in the light of changes in the economic situations and particularly with regard to their production and supply. The number of essential commodities which stood at 70 in 1989, has been brought down to 15 at present through such periodic reviews. To facilitate free trade and commerce in respect of the essential commodities, efforts are always made to delete as many commodities as possible from the purview of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

(b) No, Sir. Does not arise.

(c) and (d) The need to relax various controls on agricultural products including controls on inter-State movement of such products was